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# Child Sexual Abuse Offenders

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## Why Do We Care About Sex Offender Motivation?

- The motivation of the sex offender impacts the experience of the victim.
- Motivation determines the nature of grooming, and often explains why victims do not disclose immediately.
- Incest offenders may play an ongoing role in their child's life – not every offender goes to prison.
- Safety plans are better designed when we know what motivates an individual to offend against a child.

## Assailant Motivational Typologies

- Reality----each offense is different, as is each offender, but general themes are apparent.
- Acts of child sexual abuse are typically based on meeting some other emotional or psychological need.
- Explanations are not excuses or justification, but information that helps plan for safety.

## Intimacy/Affection/Nurturance

- Offender's belief that they are valued, loved, or cared for because sexual contact is occurring. Fantasy of closeness or connection.
- Grooming (often through guilt) is focused on having victim believed she/he is obligated to care of offender or protect family integrity.
- Offender sabotages child's relationships with others (friends, family, allied adults) creating exclusivity in relationship.
- Victim may feel loyal, protective---having the role of care-taker. Does not want to disrupt what is seen as fragile family integrity.

## Purposeful Harm (rage, sadistic)

- Intention to harm, to cause damage. Is focused on the specific *suffering* of the victim. Victim's pain reflects pain offender feels. Suffering can be eroticized. Less common in incest.
- Victims are often physically injured, and are terrorized. They may fear for their lives if they disclose abuse.
- Trauma may make disclosure difficult. Stories may be too sensational for others to believe

## Anger

- Usually connected to offender's sense of loss or disempowerment. Losses are sudden and have significant meaning to offender. Often associated with domestic violence. They may hurt a child "to get even" with others.
- Grooming involves getting child to align with offender's sense of victimization. The relationship is structured around keeping offender from getting angry. Child may believe he/she "deserves" the abuse because of some transgression.
- Offender threats of isolation, escalation, punishment and repercussions for other (including other parent or pets) may keep a child from disclosing.

## Esteem

- Sexual conquest is associated with value or self-definition as a "competent man." Own value is determined by "admiration" by others or demonstrated power or "accomplishment". Interactions are predicated on a victor and a defeated individual. (less common in adult/child incest)
- Grooming may involve drugs or alcohol or verbal coercion. Some force, but not necessarily physical injury.
- Victims often feel responsible for their own vulnerability. Victims feel ashamed, and may be blamed by others for their predicament.

## Power/control

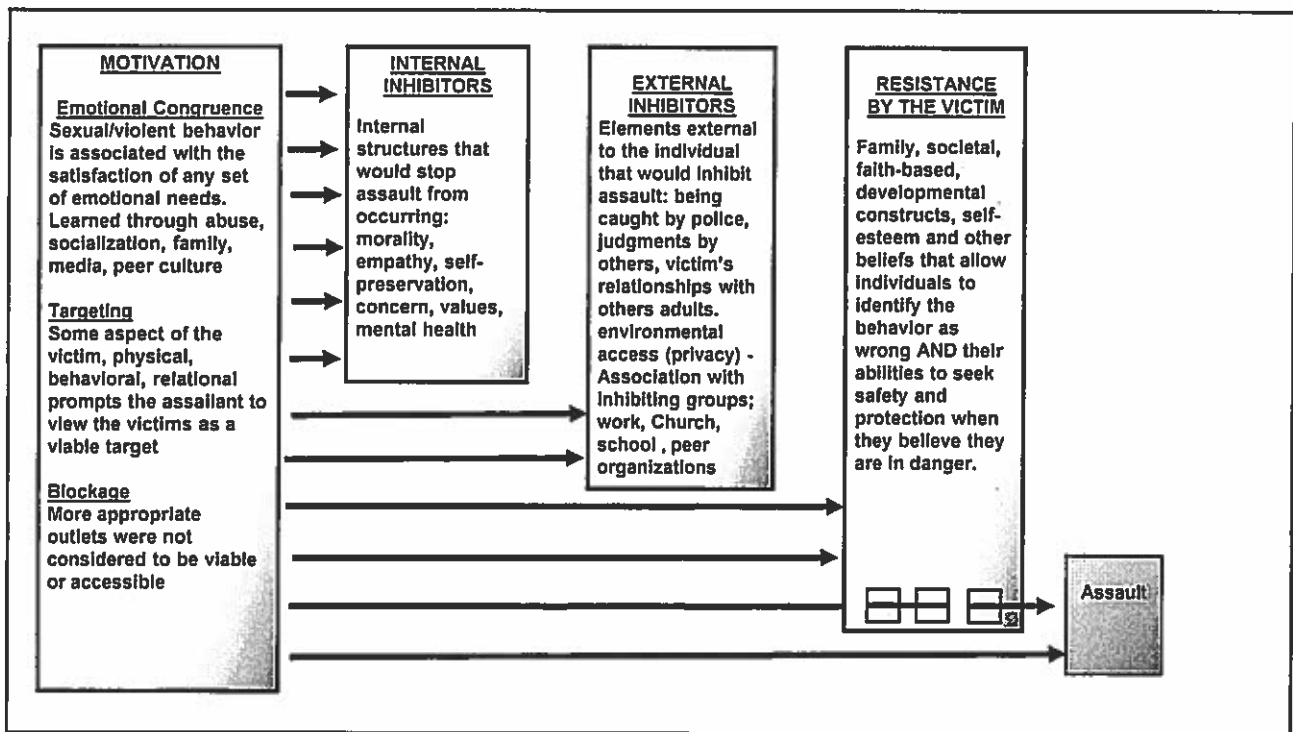
- Intention to disempower another to achieve a sense of balance in with own sense of powerlessness. Sexual control is designed to feed the offender's need to feel powerful. Offender is often already in position of authority.
- Grooming (to accept authority) may target family, community, work, as well as victim. Not necessarily groomed to accept sexual behavior, but to be compliant in all things.
- Victims feel hopeless, unsupported, powerless. They see others as powerless as well. Don't question authority.

## Sexual Arousal or Preference

- Pedophiles, sexual addiction: World is organized around meeting sexual desires. Nature of these desires are typically rooted in significant cognitive distortions---not necessarily mental illness. Pedophiles have primary arousal to pre-pubertal children. All sex offenders of children are not pedophiles.
- When groomed, entire household may be sexualized. Poor boundaries are normalized. Usually isolated family.
- Can involve sex trafficking, child pornography.

## Let's build a child sexual offender

- Most acts of CSA have a long prelude before abuse actually occurs
  - Some elements of the abuse are *fixed and unchangeable*
  - Some elements of the abuse may be *changed through education, counseling and monitoring*.
  - Some elements may be *situational and are transitory*.
- Dynamics that contributed to the offense may still be in play in the family, even if the abuse has stopped.
- These should be considered in safety planning and recuperative services







**Evolution of Child Sexually Abusive Acts:** Motivational elements set the stage for abuse to occur. Internal and External Inhibitors and Resistance by the Victim may stop assault, so must be minimized or circumvented by the offender. Mental illness, encumbered psycho-social development (morality, empathy, impulse control, anticipate consequences), entitlement beliefs, substance use, profound loss, low self-esteem, marital conflict, social isolation, pornography, and unhealthy/exploitive cohort can all reduce effectiveness or existence of inhibitors. Children without support, without education regarding sexual safety, without adult allies and children who are children are vulnerable to assault.

